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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP (HARRIS)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [AMGT](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: SAUDI H1N1 UPDATE: HEALTH MINISTER DISCUSSES HAJJ
PREP WITH CHARGE, 137 CASES TO DATE

HEALTH MINISTER MEETS CDA

11. (SBU) Charge d'Affaires Ambassador Erdman met with Health Minister Dr. Abdullah al-Rabeeah on July 8 to discuss Saudi healthcare issues including H1N1 preparation for the upcoming Hajj. Rabeeah noted that the Ministry's plan follows the 15 recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and World Health Organization as provided after the June 27-July 1 H1N1 workshop in Jeddah. If the strain remains mild, the Ministry will gradually treat H1N1 like seasonal flu as is being done in the United States and Canada, he said. Rabeeah said the new Assistant Undersecretary (referred to as Deputy Minister) for Preventive Medicine, Dr. Ziyad Maymash, is an infectious disease control expert by training. The Minister also introduced an International Coordinator for the Ministry, Dr. Taha Ali Melibary.

137 CONFIRMED CASES, HAJJ PREP CONTINUES

12. (SBU) The Ministry of Health (MOH) announced July 8 that the number of confirmed cases of H1N1 in Saudi Arabia since June 3 has risen to 137. There have been no known H1N1 fatalities to date in the country, and 80 H1N1 patients had been released from hospitals as of July 2. In preparation for the upcoming pilgrimage season, the Council of Ministers encouraged all countries to instruct their Hajj and Umrah pilgrims to follow the recommendations of the H1N1 Jeddah workshop. The recommendations include monitoring of entry points, vaccination of all pilgrims and health care providers once a vaccine is available, and urging pilgrims to practice good hygiene. The Deputy Minister for Preventive Medicine said quarantine facilities had been arranged at airport arrival lounges to isolate Hajj and Umrah pilgrims with H1N1 symptoms.

13. (SBU) Agence France Press reported on July 4 that the Tunisian government suspended travel to Mecca for Umrah. Econoff called the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Tunisian Embassy in Riyadh to confirm the story, and he said that he had not heard about the measure.
ERDMAN